

Randall Road Corridor: McHenry County to begin widening project in summer 2018



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ALGONQUIN – After more than a decade of planning, construction soon will begin to widen one of McHenry County's most-traveled and congested transportation corridors: Randall Road.

On Nov. 14, the McHenry County Board adopted a five-year McHenry County Transportation Program – a \$212.6 million endeavor that allocates \$41.6 million for Randall Road, a project that will add one lane in each direction and open additional turning lanes at intersections, according to transportation officials.

The North-South corridor – and the intersection of Randall and Algonquin roads in particular – has become a central crossroad for county motorists. Between 2013 and 2016, average traffic volumes showed between 68,000 and 85,000 vehicles traveled through the intersection daily, according to the Illinois Department of Transportation. Capacity became a problem long ago.

"The intersection at Randall Road and Algonquin Road has been a bottleneck for some time," said Scott Hennings, McHenry County Division of Transportation's principal transportation planner. "This should allow motorists to get through more effectively."

The county's transportation plan will spend \$41.6 million for an expansion of Randall Road. The program will widen Randall Road to six lanes from Harnish Drive in Algonquin north to Polaris Drive in Lake in the Hills. The project also includes additional turn lanes at the intersection of Randall and Algonquin roads.

To help cover construction costs, the county will use \$19.6 million in federal funding: \$10 million comes from the Federal Highway Administration's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds and \$9 million comes from the Federal Surface Transportation Program. The project will use \$21.1 million in county funds, according to transportation program documents.

County officials will put the construction project out to bid in the spring, and construction crews are expected to start in the summer, Hennings said. Construction will take two years to complete.

The Randall Road project has spent a long time in development. The McHenry County Division of Transportation first received the project in 2007, Hennings said.

"Projects of this scale take some time," Hennings said.

Algonquin Village President John Schmitt has been waiting even longer.

"In 2002, we started to plan how we were going to get this done," Schmitt said. "We're getting it done now."

In 2014, the county passed on a controversial proposal to build a continuous-flow intersection at Randall and Algonquin roads. The proposed continuous-flow intersection, which would have involved a serious redesign of the intersection, encountered significant opposition from area businesses and elected officials from Algonquin and Lake in the Hills.

In 2016, Schmitt attended a McHenry County Board meeting to urge officials to adopt a plan for Randall Road. He said the tax revenue the county gets from Algonquin businesses along Randall Road – \$120 million in sales tax, \$120 million in mass-transit road tax and \$800,000 in property taxes – is in jeopardy without improvements.

“There are times when you can turn from Harnish Drive onto northbound Randall and stop because traffic is backed up,” Schmitt said. “That impedes progress.”

Randall Road is a critical transportation component for motorists and businesses alike, Schmitt said, and the county’s commitment to improving that corridor is commendable.

“If we lose that money because the improvements don’t happen, the county suffers,” Schmitt said. “If we impede people’s abilities to go to businesses by not investing in the infrastructure, it’s a self-fulfilling prophecy. The entire county depends on the tax dollars coming out of that corridor.”